



COVID-19 Face Coverings: Frequently Asked Questions

All New Yorkers must wear a face covering when outside of their home if they cannot maintain at least 6 feet from others. It is essential that people continue to practice physical distancing and good hand hygiene even when wearing a face covering — including keeping 6 feet of distance between themselves and others whenever possible. A face covering is one more precaution we can take to help stop the spread of COVID-19, especially by people who have COVID-19 but do not have symptoms.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a face covering?

A face covering is any well-secured paper or cloth (like a bandana or scarf) that covers your nose and mouth. A face covering with an exhalation valve should not be used as it allows unfiltered exhaled air to escape to others.

Who must wear a face covering?

A New York State mandate requires everyone to wear a face covering when outside their home if unable to maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others. Examples include walking on a busy street, going to pharmacies and grocery stores, or going to the doctor. You must wear a face covering at all times when riding public transportation, such as the subway, ferry, bus, taxis, and car services, even if you can maintain distance from others.

If you live in a facility that has shared kitchens, bathrooms, or other common spaces, wear a face covering when you leave your apartment or room.

People who are sick should wear a face covering while at home if they cannot maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others, and at all times whenever they leave home.

Do children need to wear a face covering?

Children over the age of 2 must wear a face covering. Small children are more likely to touch their face covering, so caretakers should wash children's hands or apply hand sanitizer often.

I have a health problem that makes it hard for me to wear a face covering. Do I still need to wear a face covering?

If you have a health issue that makes you unable to tolerate a face covering, you do not need to wear one. This makes practicing physical distancing and hand hygiene even more essential.

Do I need to wear a face covering when I am exercising?

No, as long as you maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others.

When do workers need to wear a face covering?

Workers must wear a face covering at work if they cannot maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others. Employers must provide face coverings to employees for free. Your employer may have additional requirements as to when a face covering, or other protection, is needed.

I had COVID-19 and am better now. Do I still need to wear a face covering?

Yes. The New York State requirement to wear a face covering applies even if you had COVID-19.

What type of face covering is better — paper or cloth?

Either a paper or cloth face covering is fine, as long as it covers your nose and mouth. Do not use a face covering with an exhalation valve.

Please do not use health care worker masks, such as N95 or surgical masks. It is essential that we save health care worker masks for our health care workers.

How often do I need to wash my face covering?

If you are using a cloth face covering, we recommend washing once a day by hand or machine using detergent. **The face covering should be fully dry before using.** People should have a few face coverings so they can rotate for washing.

For how long can I use a paper face covering?

You can continue to use a paper face covering until it becomes damaged, dirty or wet.

Are there precautions I should take with my face covering?

Using face coverings incorrectly can spread germs. For this reason, it is important to properly wear, store and dispose of face coverings by doing the following:

- Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, every time you put on and take off your face covering. If you are unable to clean your hands, be very careful not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Do not put face coverings where others can touch them or where germs trapped in your face covering can touch other surfaces, such as counter tops or your kitchen table.
- Do not throw your face covering loose in a bag or backpack. Keep a plastic bag with you to store your face covering if you will be taking it off when outside your home.
- Properly dispose of used paper face coverings in the garbage. Do not throw single-use face coverings or disposable gloves on the street.

Is it possible to make my own face covering?

Yes! A face covering can be a scarf, bandana or other cloth. See [facebook.com/nycmayorsoffice/videos/729510477585270](https://www.facebook.com/nycmayorsoffice/videos/729510477585270) for some ideas on how to make a face covering. Additional ideas can be found at [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html).